



WELCOME TO THE DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #155!

[The cover was by maverick of the artworld Christopher Robinson Zimmerman.]

Yes, we have drafted Rob Naylor- a lil ball of reviewing fury- to join the ranks of the Death Valley Playaz. He likes a lot more stuff than we do, I hear. Hopefully, he won't become a broken, beaten man once we start pawing crap off on him to review. So welcome aboard, young NAYLOR. We are amazed and delighted that you took us up on this. Since young Schneider's review of the Lucha Libre feeds into my review of the Lucha Libre, let's start the show with the man from DC! The man who did da Butt on the same stage with Baryshnikov at the National! A motherfuckah whose YOU CAN'T KILL NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU PUNK-ASS MOTHERFUCKERS STAB HIM! A three sport superstar- football, rugby, boxing! A friend! A Firebrand! A Patriot! A King of MEN! It's PHIL (good to his mother) SCHNEIDER, motherfucker. !@!@!@!@ PHIL SCHNEIDER'S ON-GOING TOP 20 of 2006

Here is the current list, reviews for the older matches are in previous DVDVR's

1. La Mascara/El Hijo Del Santo v. Blue Panther/Tarzan Boy CMLL GDL 1/1
2. Rey Mysterio v. Mark Henry WWE 1/15

3. Rey Mysterio/Bobby Lashley/Chris Benoit v. JBL/Finlay/Randy Orton WWE 2/23
4. Samoa Joe v. Necro Butcher IWA-MS 1/12
5. Juventud v. Kid Kash WWE 1/3
6. Undertaker v. Kurt Angle WWE 2/19
7. Finlay/JBL v. Lashley/Chris Benoit WWE 2/16
8. Finlay v. Chris Benoit WWE 1/30
9. Samoa Joe v. BJ Whitmer ROH 1/14
10. Shadow WX/Mammoth Sasaki v. Abdullah Kobayashi/Daisuke Sekimoto BJW 1/27/06
11. Chris Benoit v. Randy Orton WWE 1/24
12. A.J. Styles v. Matt Sydal ROH 1/14
13. HHH v. Big Show WWE 2/13

1. La Mascara/El Hijo Del Santo v. Blue Panther/Tarzan Boy CMLL GDL 1/1: Arena Mexico

CMLL had an amazing 2005. You could probably list a dozen matches which were as good as anything in the world, and at least another dozen right below that level. However the style done in Arena Mexico was a little removed from traditional lucha match structure. There were some amazing brawls, and a bunch of fast matches with big spots, but you would rarely see the slow burn lucha match with a caida of matwork, building to a big finish. In fact you are almost more likely to see matwork on Smackdown than on CMLL TV. That is the great thing about shows like Guadalajara and IWRG, they will often run more traditional matches, which will always be fun, and sometime you will get gems like this one.

Blue Panther on one team and El Hijo Del Santo on the other is the kind of thing that gives a real lucha fan a tingle. They immediately go at it, and the matwork and standing exchanges were just beautiful. Panther is often considered one of the best mat wrestler in history, but Santo is always right with him. They have a lot of stuff that they do against each other, and they break out a bunch of it in the first fall. My favorite section has Santo reversing a Tapitia, and ending up on Panther's back, he then shifts into multiple holds, sleeper, into full nelson, into swastika, into a octopus. Mascara and Tarzan Boy were fine secondary partners here, including a nice Panther v. Mascara mat section in the second fall.

The match speeds up into a nice fast third fall, with both Mascara and Santo hitting a pair of dives, including a huge plancha from one turnbuckle nearly to another, and a lot of very nice near falls.

3. Rey Mysterio/Bobby Lashley/Chris Benoit v. JBL/Finlay/Randy Orton WWE 2/23: Fit Finlay beating up Rey Mysterio is about the best thing you can see in pro-wrestling in the 2006. I mean fuck, that is the best babyface in the world, getting his asskicked by the best heel. While this match focused on building up Rey, and it did a great job of that, they weren't afraid to give us little tastes of Benoit v. JBL and Finlay v. Lashley. I really like Finlay taunting the rookie into making a mistake, and pounding on him, with Lashley still being too much of a stud to drop. Lashley's spear kind of stinks but Finlay makes it look great. Benoit breaking JBL's hand and then just swarming on him was beautiful, if it is given any time, JBL v. Benoit is stealing Wrestlemania.

Still this match was all about Rey as underdog babyface, and he was Kikuchi v. Jumbo, Ricky v. Krushchev awesome in this. Rey sold amazing, and really knew the perfect time to throw in a hope spot. He has become great at emoting through his mask, and is so over that the crowd is with every move he makes. All three heels were great in this beatdown, Finlay is a machine, all over Rey when he is on offense, his ring skirt spot is the coolest signature spot in wrestling. However it was probably a mistake for Finlay to be putting on a chinlock when he is working a tag with Randy Orton. I mean Orton is about 75% chinlock, so you don't need to expose his offense like that. JBL was kicking ass too, I loved the uppercuts to the neck and back. Orton is the weak link of the heels, but he is a lot of fun as a prick, and his little taunting of Rey does more to make you hate him than pissing on a corpse ever could. The thing that was so great about this match, was the hope it generated, it looks like Smackdown will just be busting out versions of this every week, which could turn into Dangerous Alliance 1992 level of awesome.

6. Undertaker v. Kurt Angle WWE 2/19: We all come into watching matches (or really any art) with preconceived notions, preferences and biases. I came into this match with a bias against Undertaker, Kurt Angle and WWE main event style wrestling. So I was pretty shocked at how much I enjoyed a Undertaker v. Kurt Angle WWE Main Event. Of course a lot of what I liked about this match is that it went against its inherent Angleness, Takerness and WWEishness. Undertaker spent this match selling, Angle spent the match focused and for the most part reigned in, and the match itself was based around in ring wrestling, and not ref bumps, visual falls and Shane McMahon belt shots.

I really liked all of the early Kurt Angle legwork, the kicks to the patella were really nasty, and the ringpost figure four and apron leg drop counter were both really nice looking. My favorite part of this match, was all of the working of the ten counts. Angle has to break both the ringpost figure four and outside the ring ankle lock, because of the count, and there are other sections early where the Undertaker has to roll back in to break the count. That of course leads to one of the big spots in the match, where Angle stops Nick Patrick from counting out the Undertaker. "I want to beat this motherfucker in the ring." I am liking Angle's current badass killer face character a lot. It is a basic wrestling character and one the WWE hasn't done since early Austin. I think it is because you have an old school guy like Dusty helming Smackdown. This is opposed to shitty sitcom writers who tend to write every heel as oafish Dean of Students in a 80's college movie, and every face as "guy full of quips" like the Third Guy with the Girl and the Pizza Place.

Match had its flaws though, which keeps it in the middle of this list right now. You have you stereotypical guy out mat wrestles the Olympian opener, which is one of the most irritating parts of any Angle match. Cole and Tazz spend the entire entrances talking up the Striker v. Grappler aspect of the match, and then you have Taker locking a key lock on the mat, and Angle punching his way out. I also didn't like the table bump, although it led to the great 10 count spot, it still felt thrown in and meaningless. They need to retire the table spot for six months or so, as it has really become a WWE main event crutch.

Finishing section had a lot of really great looking counters, although it felt like it went one or two counters too many. Angle has a NOAH juniors/X division tendency to have his finishes go too long, it didn't bug me as much here as it has in the past, but it was still there. My main problem was that even though the majority of the match was based around Angle working the leg, and Taker fighting out of the ankle lock, the finish was focused around the triangle choke. The match was an ankle lock match, and should have had an ankle lock finish, Taker didn't need to tap out, Angle could have rolled the ankle lock into a pin, but after all of the focus on Angle's aggression and leg attack, it makes him look weak to have to pull a flash counter on Taker's submission. One could point out that even in when losing, Taker ends up subtly burying the guy he puts over, but that would probably make you paranoid.

7. Finlay/JBL v. Lashley/Chris Benoit WWE 2/16: I think we all knew that when Finlay was coming back, that he was going to be able to whoop someones ass. You can be old and broken down and still kick someones ass, Tatanka will still kick your ass, Kurisu will still kick your ass, Gypsy Joe will still kick your ass. I don't think anyone really expected Finlay to come back after 6+ years of inactivity, after nerve damage to his leg, and still be such an amazing athletic bumper. Watch Lashley v. Finlay and you think "Man this guy is awesome, look at him crush Finlay" watch Lashley against anyone else and you think " Boy this guy punches like he is afraid he is going to tear a lat." There is a section where Finlay is collapsing in the corner under Lashley's punches and you almost want the ref to stop the match.

This was a really fun match, although it was really a series of neat sections and didn't really come together in the end. The opening section on Benoit's hand was brutal, JBL stomping the crap out of it, and then Finlay's nasty digital manipulation. Very odd that WWE ran two TV matches in one week based around hand work, as opposed to no matches in the previous 40 or so years, this felt like a rib by Dean Malenko or something. The hand work in this match was both applied and sold better than in the HHH v. Show match, although it really ended up being kind of meaningless. Benoit tags out and it is kind of forgotten. Then they go into the Lashley section, which was fine, but you really get greedy watching these, you want all Benoit v. Finlay. Still this is what you want out of a television match, Finlay and Benoit killing each other, JBL tossing reckless clotheslines, Booker T name dropping his Global title runs, finger breaking, and Shillelagh shots.

10. Shadow WX/Mammoth Sasaki v. Abdullah Kobayashi/Daisuke Sekimoto BJJ 1/27/06: This was basically an indy Double Takeshi's v. an indy Sugiara and an indy IZU in a big match for a tag belt. I would really be into Double Takeshi's v. Sugiara and IZU and I was digging this. I hadn't seen Shadow WX in a while, and he dropped the face paint, and is now weirdly handsome. Like a soap star playing a surgeon or something, just bizarre, is BJJ trying to steal the DragonDoor audience now that their money man is going to jail? I also don't remember him being this good, as all of his stuff was really stiff and good looking. Mammoth cut his fro which was a real mistake, as he looks a lot more generic now, and kind of fades into the background. Sekimoto is the weirdest looking guy in wrestling. He has this muscular lumpy body and this really tiny head. Most roid guys have huge Family Circle heads, but he is apparently taking some weird Japanese steroids that make his head shrink. He looks like a giant cartoon baby,

and every time he sells it looks like he is crying for his blankie. Abdullah is pretty bizarre too, he is a deathmatch worker, a fat guy doing a son of Abdullah gimmick, who has all this highflying offense. He hits a top rope splash, top rope Abby elbow, nice tope, and even a flying Mistico style plancha armdrag. Makes no sense, but I really enjoyed him here.

Match itself was your basic Puro tag structure, long beatdowns leading into a bunch of big move near falls. Being Big Japan, you had a bunch of chair shots, which worked fine, WX and Sasaki have a bunch of conchairto variations which look good and are nasty. They had a bunch of cool looking moves that got hit well, this was like good FMW heavyweight wrestling, without a lot of the problems with that style, everyone sold everything, there was no really jumping up from stuff, and the pins were broken up, rather than a lot of ludicrous kick outs. The finish maybe went two or three nearfalls too many, although it wasn't as bad as it usually is in matches like this. I want to see all four of these guys again.

13.HHH v. Big Show WWE 2/13: I wouldn't expect this list to have a large number of Helmsley matches, but this one is going to make it for now. It goes about 9 minutes which is exactly the right length. Helmsley doesn't have nearly enough stuff to fill the 30+ minutes he is always being booked in. Now I am not talking about moves (although he doesn't have many of those), I am talking about stuff, mat exchanges, bumps, a variety of stooges or comedy bumps, brawling spots, selling. He just doesn't have 30 minutes of stuff, so a lot of his long matches end up lapping each other. Here he only has 8 or so minutes to work so he doesn't run out of things to do. This match also has Show bleeding early, that is real good, because Helmsley really only has good punches when he is working a cut. Here all of his punches are on the cut, so they look good.

Show, much like JBL, is a guy who learned to work against Eddie Guerrero. The pre-brawl sections of this match are worked almost spot for spot the same as the awesome Eddie v. Show match from April 2004. Show starts off dominate using power offense, with his opponent getting a couple of small hope spots, then he tears up the arm and hand, again with big power moves. Hell even the big transition to offense (the DDT from the chokeslam) was straight out of that match. Jacking Eddie's match structure to make HHH matches watchable, is a type of necrophilia I can stomach.

I really like the out of control 80's All Japan finish as a finish, and I also dig Helmsley using a rope break to save Show's finisher. While the stairs bumps weren't great, the gimmicked rail spear is a sweet looking finish, and really makes the collapsed wall that TNA is using in its opening look bush league and weak.

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Rude and Bull: Greatest Makeshift tag team ever.

[ROB NAYLOR]

The GIMMICK. The Worker.

The above is a tried and true method of so many great tag teams over the years in professional wrestling. The idea of taking one flamboyant fast talker who can gab people into the buildings and just has a unique look and matching them up with a gritty wrestler, who you know will be able to just bump like mad, carry a match through his natural abilities and make the team mesh is one that probably dates to the 50's.

But since I'm not that old, I'll note some prime examples of teams such as this from later days such as Superstar Graham and Pat Patterson on the West Coast, Jesse Ventura and Adrian Adonis in the Midwest, Rick Rude and Jesse Barr in Florida, Austin Idol and Tommy Rich in Memphis, Michael Hayes and Terry Gordy in Florida, Memphis and Texas and of course, my favorite team of all times, Ravishin' Rick Rude and Ragin' Bull Manny Fernandez in the 1987 NWA area.

Ravishin and Ragin or the "Real RnR" were apparently not pals when the team started. Fernandez initially resented the fact that he was taking up the lion's share of the bumping and workload of many matches. Rude flat out told Fernandez, "Manny, I'm the gimmick, you are the worker" and Fernandez immediately knew his role in the team was to be the ultimate utility wrestler and pace the shit accordingly. They grew to be very good friends, according to Fernandez, and were a great tag team, both in and out of the rings, as the stories note that both hated Paul Jones and would actually take pleasure in ribbing him to death constantly, including Bull desecrating Jones' trademark hat.

The fact that Fernandez even got along with Rude is alone a feat, as Manny gets along with so few people, based upon his tough guy reputation and his somewhat warranted reputation as a trouble maker. BS artist or not, there was no denying and never will be denying that Manny Fernandez from 1984-1988 was an absolutely awesome wrestling machine who had he not stirred shit and maybe gotten along better with his higher ups and co-workers, could have been one of the all-time memorable wrestlers.

Rude and Bull had just about the coolest look possible. You had Rude, the SMOOTH OPERATOR, who was always ripped, tan, suave and legitimately a tough dude.

You then had Manny. The scrappy, scarred, pudgy, compact, basic WRESTLER who had dark purple, red and brown trunks, boots, taped up fists and the redneck bandana and leather fingerless gloves and vests that were a staple of the 80's. He threw up the hook-em-horns and just was an absolute BULL in every sense of the word, just destroying motherfuckers by running them over in the ring or any bar he'd go to.

Put them together and have them come out to Queens "We will rock you" and you have a winning formula. Hearing them stoically brag about how great and badass they were and how they were going to be the "Awesome Twosome" for a long time and throwing out insults to "Punky" Morton week in and week out was a pleasure.

I wasn't from the south or the Carolina's, nor was I a teenage girl, so I always wanted them to kill the Rock N Roll Express. Now, when they wrestled the Roadies....I was torn, but against Morton and Gibson, I was def. pulling for Rude and Bull.

Rude's in ring stuff was basic, but he was great in his role. Chinlocks, knees to the guy, forearms, short punches to the jaw, camel clutches, etc...finishing of course with the "Rude Awakening or Reverse Bulldog" (they couldn't say DDT on NWA in the mid to late 80's).

Fernandez, on the other hand was just one of those wrestlers, who it hurt to watch, in a good way. You'd watch him just use his freaky athleticism to out wrestle everyone. Leapfrogs, dropkicks, back-elbows, flying elbows, flying backfists, top wristlocks (NOONE ever worked a top wristlock better than Fernandez, and don't argue with me, as even if someone did, I'll go out of my way to NOT see it) and great droptoeholds, waistlocks and half nelsons on the mat.

Let alone, he had THE sickest kneedrops ever. LOUD and just awesome to view. They looked 100% legit. They might have been, who knows. His top rope Kneedrop was sternum-breaking, good times. And of course again, the flying burrito was the most devastating finish ever. He just came at people with such incredible force with that stuff. I always dug the variation of Rude holding the opponent in a bearhug type move and Manny popping off the far ropes and killing the job guys.

Sadly, these guys had a short reign, so they aren't remembered by most. But they had a long enough reign that they had lots of TV squashes, matches with the Rock N Rolls, matches with the Road Warriors (I found a fun match on YOUTUBE (?) recently, of all things from Florida I believe) and of course, their run in the Crockett Cup.

But it all came to an end. As Rude left Crockett for a pay raise and Titan Sports and Manny was left with Barbarian and Ivan Koloff and few others as his friends after the fallout of the infamous brawl with Tully Blanchard backstage at the Cup in Baltimore apparently wound up with Manny being somewhat blackballed politically. He enjoyed a stay going to AWA and spent most of the rest of his career hanging around with fellow close friends like Murdoch, McDaniels, Stevens, Funk and others, but he never really had a major run again. Word has it he still is close with Jerry Briscoe and Chavo Sr. and he even was friends with Chavito and Eddy, but he never got any kind of run, due to his nature to be a shit-stirrer.

I hear he works in Texas these days. Every time I see Ki or Homicide at an indy show, I always ask about Fernandez, but neither have been a good guy of late, so it's been impossible to talk to them, since Ki doesn't talk to much to fans when he's a bad guy outside of the shows. Which is another part of the great Manny legacy of respecting the traditions of the business. Every time I watch Homicide's in ring footing and pacing and just sheer physical style, I'm reminded of the Bull. Every time I see Ki kinda rough someone up or wrestle snug and take a beating back, regardless of who he's wrestling, I think of Manny and how he'd approve and say aloud "Black eye, busted lip - Good for the business", which was the same thing Harley Race told him back in the late 70's.

Rude is gone, but not forgotten. He went on to be an absolute fucking force in the late 80's and early 90's. Both made it in New Japan for a short time in the late eighties *Manny* and early nineties *Rude*. Too bad it wasn't during the same time. Seeing them teamed again vs. Hase and Sasaki or Mutoh and Chono would have been awesome. And simply even THINKING of Rude and Bull vs. Rick and Scott Steiner in 1990 makes me think they'd have changed the face of hard hitting and physical wrestling.

But alas, paths never crossed and we are left with the memories. I'm pretty sure Vince McMahon will never put out or unearth any Manny Fernandez matches on DVD's...but if you ever have the means, I implore everyone to seek out his stuff in Southwest, NWA from 84-88, AWA in 89, and maybe if Mike Graham keeps his dad's tape library, we'll some day see those Manny vs. Harley Race and Terry Funk Florida Championship wrestling classics that are on some tape reel in a basement right now.

That's the short and sweet DVDMB review debut for me. I'll be back next time with a bunch of singles matches and thoughts on stuff like recent Shibata, Jack Evans in ROH's six man trios tourney, Hero and Claudio Tag Rudo Bases of the states, Yago vs. Necro and why Roderick Strong is the most underrated indy star of 05 and thus far, 06. Hope you enjoyed the memories.

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Smoky Mountain Wrestling Night of the Legends - August 5, 1994
[RAVEN MACK]

For me, SMW was the last real wrestling promotion, but also probably the first smart mark promotion. It was the last show I ever remember seeing coming through air waves into the mad scientific tower of metal on top of my mom's house to pick up images that beamed up on our television set. But when I first ever lived with someone in college who had a computer and poked around reading about wrestling bullshit on the newsboards things all old school dork style, SMW was the first one I saw mentioned a lot as an alternative to the major corporate wrestling affairs that seemed to lack the soul of the wrestling of my youth.

Moving leaps and bounds into the technocratic age where I will soon plummet to my own financial doom, I am now linked by cyber-wires to the Netflix robot, and I tell it things and they show up at my house unannounced, and sometimes it's a cartoon about unicorns and I can occupy my daughters for 45 minutes while me and the wife go upstairs and reconnect frantically like rabbits, all while hoping to not make a number three. And then sometimes, SMW shows up, like yesterday. I let late night really drunk Raven deal with all queue issues so that regular part of the day mailbox checking Raven can be surprised or disappointed anew with whatever shows up. I was stoked to see Smoky Mountain Wrestling in my mailbox.

Killer Kyle vs. Doug Furnas: One of the reasons I love the professional wrestling is it gives societal degenerates like Killer Kyle a place to function somewhat regularly and acceptably, and

to serve a purpose within the larger local society. I think it was Bruiser Bedlam who's in Canuck jail for being a murderous biker, but I'm sure from the looks of him Killer Kyle has done plenty of fucked-up stuff since SMW's days as well. Furnas, for me, has always been a serviceable mid-card babyface, but not much more. He has "TV Title match fifteen minute time limit" written all over him.

Perfectly acceptable small promotion supercard curtain jerker - a local hero beats a dastardly heel, keeping them both noteworthy in the minds of the fan.

Bob Orton Jr./ Dick Slater vs. The Mongolian Stomper/ Ronnie Garvin: You know, I don't always buy into how brilliant Jim Cornette is supposed to be, but if he can somehow book a match in east Tennessee with a mute Mongolian and a Canadian who talks like a less eloquent Jean-Claude Van Damme against two good ole boys fired up for a fight and some beers, and make it work, then he must be part-genius at least.

Slater is so unpredictably sudden with his movements from the apron and ringside, you can tell he has found his way around piles of cheap white substances with pocket mirrors and credit cards before. Slater reminds me 1000% of the types of guys who ran with my dad when I was young, and that type of white southern male is dying off and not being replaced by their offspring in the same manner. Those guys are disappearing or getting condemned for stabbing cheating women who wouldn't let them get their goddamned clothes out the apartment, and their sons are too busy downloading old Paul Wall & Chamillionaire mixtapes from limewire to fill those shoes.

This match is what it is - a legends match - but I wish every other legends match put forth half the effort this one did. Slater and Orton take turns leading the dance with Ronnie Garvin, keeping the Stomper unexposed as a hunched fraud in his role in this match as the brief flurrier of violent emotion to help his partner in goodness. Once Stomper finally gets in, he takes his boot off as a weapon, because Mongolians are an uncivilized lot by nature, as well as nurture.

Gangstas in-ring interview

New Jack in Smoky Mountain was one of the best runs of promos ever in the history of the professional wrestling. It made his career, and he's spent most of the rest of it trying to be as shockingly relevant to his audience as he was then, and never quite recaptured it. A south central gangsta stepping into the hills of the Smokies and not just dogging out the obvious in the fat redneck audience, but mocking the NAACP and anything else. It's a wonder New Jack never got killed by the end of that Gangstas/Rock-n-Roll Express feud. "I done beat brothers that have been in jail for murder... I done beat brothers that went to jail for molesting their own kids..." it all was so simple but played up to the rural fears of the heaven-bent audience. That, my friends, is a heel. The reason shit like that fake Arab in WWE didn't work wasn't because he was pretending to be a terrorist, it didn't work because he was obviously pretending to be a terrorist. If that shit had been even halfway realistic, instead of people firing up their electronic signatures for some pussy-assed online petition, they would've been trying to throw their five dollar cup of Mountain Dew at his ass while he walked to the ring.

And kids wave confederate flag bandanas at the Gangstas as they talk shit walking back to the dressing room.

Chris Candido/ Brian Lee vs The Rock-n-Roll Express: Tammy Fytch was so simply cute back then - that hot bank teller that you flirted with when turning your paycheck to dollar bills on a Friday afternoon. It's sad to see how turned out her life became. Fuck, watching this whole show is like a terrible roll call of sadness that'd make Bukowski blush. New Jack always being New Jack, Candido drugged up cleaned up then dead, Sytch hawking her dilapidated wares in DVD form, Bruiser Bedlam in jail for murder, even fuckin' Ricky Morton just getting released from doing a bid for not paying child support on a kid that's already grown.

Brian Lee has always been a guilty pleasure of mine, and a Best of Brian Lee comp may not sell much, but I'd sure try to find somebody to burn me a copy of it. From his blonde mullet in Continental, to dabbling in some of Invader's bloodfests in Puerto Rico, through Smoky Mountain and into some of the great ECW nonsense before they got a PPV, he's ridden that road, and as far as I can tell, never cut his hair. Candido's character on the mic was always so spastic, but he often made worked mistakes in the ring as the full-bodied spazz, who'd go to the top rope too fast and fuck up in a mildly funny manner. I don't give a shit about most dead famous people, but I miss Candido. It's not like I'd ever go out of my way to see him, but he's one of those quality you-know-exactly-what-you're-gonna-get guys that makes you feel better just knowing their floating around in the wrestling bidness still.

I always blew off the R-n-Rs, them being so teenybopper adored, but even at this point, late in the game for them, they were really fluent with the tag wrestling. It's a shame there's no dedication to tag wrestling beyond throwing hodgepodge names together, whether it be on the corporate or indy level, anymore. Tag wrestling is a completely different beast than the singles wrestling, and it hasn't been fed very well for over a decade now.

Match does exactly what you'd expect it to - cheating ways of heel woman get countered by legend older brother on the end of a pair of handcuffs and shitty attitude tag champions get their comeuppance, and the Rock-n-Roll Express get another title belt to let dudes with a pocket full of Marlboros hold while posing for a ten-dollar Polaroid.

The Thrillseekers vs. The Heavenly Bodies: One of the major problems I have with the whole concept of the WWE developmental territory is how sheltered it is. And now everyone's riding the OVW jock like maniacs on the internet, and I haven't seen any and would be interested in watching it for sure, but this is supposed to be a minor league for the big league WWE. Think of baseball and how the minor leagues are littered with career minor leaguers as well as coaches who spent a decade or so in the big leagues, and compare that to OVW, or worse yet Deep South Wrestling. Not even close. OVW seems to be an elaborate training facility for the chosen few, which is fine if you're grooming pretty faces to say the right things they're told to say and sell more product, kinda like going to that one-week training thing in some business office building to work at Kinko's or as a Burger King night manager or some shit like that. But if you want to be the consummate professional wrestler, what's better for CM Punk - being involved in

over-thought angles with Johnny Jeter (or whoever the fuck), or having to sit in a locker room and deal with Tracy Smothers both in the ring and throughout the night in the overall wrestling event behind-the-curtains environment? No doubt, the second will give him more know-how as to how to be better at being a wrestler, though it probably won't sell more twenty-five dollar t-shirts.

Chris Jericho and Lance Storm, young promising Canucks, living in east Tennessee and having to fuck around with a team like Tom Pritchard and Jimmy Del Ray, that's good shit for them to have to deal with. Lance Storm is as vanilla as ever in the pre-match background segments, and Chris Jericho is almost corny in his enthusiastic hard rocker mode, but they are young and virile, and the best thing for a young and virile tag team to have to face in the professional wrestling is an adversary of dirty old-assed shithheads with a conniving second in their corner.

Storm is still a fairly stiff worker at this point, not meaning really hitting people, but stiff as opposed to fluent - some of his moves looking forced and rigid and trying too hard. Jericho is as well to an extent, but you could see he was ahead of Storm at this point. Going from getting stretched in a basement by a sadomasochistic Stu Hart to getting peppered by Tom Pritchard in the barely urban southern part of America; that's a training regiment that I doubt many folks will ever be privvy to again.

I also never really paid attention during my previous SMW markdoms to how great a worker Jimmy Del Ray was. He looks like a perverted roofer who knocks off early on warm spring days to drink beer and ogle teenage girls at the river, but wrestles like a man who actually cares about his job. Is he Dennis Condrey's little brother in real life?

Jericho blades a Funker-sized gusher ringside, and you know why Pritchard is a better puncher than Del Ray? They both lay in some really believable shots to a bloody Jericho's crimson head, but when Pritchard pulls his fist back, there's bloodstains on the tape around his fingers; Del Ray punched Jericho four times, and it looked good, but his hand is clean like he just washed it before the Chinese buffet. But they take turns destroying Jericho's head, and this is easily the greatest Lance Storm match I've ever seen, and all he did really was hang out on the apron and ride Jericho's bloodtrails to notoriety. Fake finish as the ref stops it, being Hildebrand the little ref's shirt sleeve is covered in blood by now, and Jericho begs for it to restart, so it does. Jericho gets a quick roll-up in from nowhere, and the crowd is happy, and the kids are alright but the dastardly heels dastardly reputation is not only kept intact but enhanced. That's some motherfuckin' professional wrestling right there.

Tony Anthony vs. Terry Gordy: My aunt had two kids by a dude she lived with for years - a truck driver, and my dad got high with him a lot of times. In fact, they lived in a trailer next to me and my dad for a year or two, and he was a fucked-up guy, verbally abusive to my aunt but not physically, and to be honest, my aunt probably deserved a lot of it because she's been a pretty fair fuck-up in her life. Well, they had two kids who are my youngest cousins, and then they split up without ever getting married, and my aunt is never home so my cousins have pretty much been raised in the same shitty trailer my grandma and her husband Bob (who is her third husband; my grandfather was her first, and the father of my two mentioned cousins' mom was

her second) that I spent a lot of time in, and their father lives not too far from me, and his brother is a roofer who lives on the same road I play horseshoes on during the summer. So I see Paul. We used to go to the drag races together a lot, and in fact I almost got stabbed once in a fight over him calling someone "nigger", which I would never condone, but how are you gonna ride 80 miles with a truck full of family and not have their back since that's your ride home. Sometimes morals are more complicated than what you think is right or wrong, and the most you can hope for in life is to protect those that you're close to and try to make them understand your concept of what's right in the process.

Anyways, Paul, the father of my youngest cousins who lives not too far from me and smoked a lot of weed with my dad, if I had to pick a wrestler that he looked almost exactly alike, it'd be Tony Anthony, except Paul is probably a little bigger.

You are on the internet, and know how awesome Terry Gordy is. A guy like Gordy, who is not defined muscularly, but can bring it, never got a shot in the WWE as a main eventer, which is why wrestling in America has turned into something immature kids and repressed homosexuals love. Terry Gordy is a real man-style asskicker, and would make a bitch like Batista cry for his chiropractor and aromatherapeutic candles within five minutes.

Gordy seems uneasy to sell, perhaps inflated ego-wise by foreign success at this point. Selling for a guy happy to have to drive to Indiana like the Dirty White Boy might seem beneath an international superstar like Gordy, but why take a job if you don't feel like working that job? Some homoerotic heel comes out and interferes on Gordy's behalf after the ref bumps himself silly, and then nothing more happens that's of note for this tape. I'm not gonna go seeking out Tony Anthony vs. Steroid SMW Lance Von Erich Type to see how this angle turns out or anything.

The prelude recap to the main event is a wonderful thing, as Bob Armstrong looks resplendent as a commissioner in a blaze orange baseball cap, and it's hard not to love the SMW commentator's desk with it's Bob Ross joy of painting rendition of the Smoky Mountains on the frontside.

The Main Event

Seriously, if you're gonna do a nifty feud recap to set up the main event match you're about to show on a DVD release, you should make it less than seven hours long. I passed out drunk the first time I tried to make it to the last match, and fell asleep on the couch the second time. I think I might've even tried a third time, but I can't be for certain.

I do know that Phil Schneider has told me he thinks Bruiser Bedlam and Killer Kyle are the same person, which would make sense. I don't know these things because I only pretend to be a smart mark; I'm actually ignorant as fuck, hate A.J. Styles matches, and can't wait to be that old drunk guy in the first row who throws a punch at the heel manager because I take it too seriously. If Killer Kyle and Bruiser Bedlam are the same person, that'd be great, and he probably spent time in jail coming up with names that had the same initials so he could reverse the order of the game playing that drinking one where you had to say famous people's names.

I'm sure he came up with Killer Kyle and Bruiser Bedlam and Dusty Dynamite and Monster Machismo and a bunch of other dumb shit.

The main event had Terry Funk and Dory Funk Jr. and one of those guys above against Bob Armstrong and an Armstrong kid and Tracy Smothers, so I'm sure it was all sorts of awesome because it was in east Tennessee and the good guys wore confederate flags and the bad guys didn't believe in God (nor His hatred of homosexuals) or Wal-Mart Supercenters.

Bob Armstrong freaks me out more than any wrestler ever. He's like 120 years old but has that big freakish chest; it's not right. I often wonder if the Road Dogg gets high all the time because he grew up as the youngest of a wrestling family who were like Gods in the southeast, so he's all fucked up in the head from the things he saw, his older brothers having sex with weird older women, dad cheating, all sorts of twisted degenerate professional wrestling on the road type shit. Or does he stay high like some telephone polls because he was in Desert Storm v1.0, and his knuckles are rotting away from the inside because of depleted uranium weaponry and plus he saw faces all blown up and shit. Or does he get stay hi-i-i-i-i-i-igh till he di-i-i-i-i-i-ies because he was in the WWE for a long time, and Vince McMahon's moral corruption machine would make a Tijuana donkey sex show look like Sunday sacrament. Hard to say, but whatever's clever. You should check this shit out because it's on Netflix, and the only other wrestling crap on Netflix is shitty CZW and shitty WWE.

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GEORGIA OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1979

[NORAH HURSTON-PEALE]

SERGEANT JACQUES GOULET AND CHRIS MARKOFF V BUZZ SAWYER AND RICKY FIELDS: More Georgia, Fall 1979 stuff. Markoff/Goulet, the RussoFranco Connection, are just the best tag team you've never heard of. Markoff does a lot of great Masked Superstar control holds, all the while wearing a CCCP singlet and looking like Bill Belichick, the former head coach of the Cleveland Browns. Goulet is the worker of the team, a chain wrestler without peer, moving deftly through a chain of four or five moves in a minute sometimes, all with great attention to psychology and story of the match. Here the heels are your veteran malefactors, with Sawyer -- who has Art Garfunkel hair here -- and Fields as 'second generation young lions'. The heels control the match, with methodical southern tag wrestling and lengthy heat segments on both faces. Just a wrestling clinic, right up until the time limit draw, with a brawl at the end of the match to give the babies a visionary victory. I assume Fields ended up fading into the more obscure deep south type indies; he could work, but lacked size, so it wouldn't surprise me if he became a ref either.

STERLING GOLDEN V MIKE FEVER: October 1979 in beautiful Solievision. A long squash here, Hogan of the future wearing Lucky Charms green tights that match his ring skills. Fever here is a third-tier jobber, competent but unexceptional, but is ring savvy enough to let Golden go through his paces. Interesting psychology: Golden hits Fever with a backbreaker but pulls

him up before the count, then Irish whip -- bearhug -- submission, for the win for the big fella. Golden wasn't really polished enough to survive the close scrutiny of working Georgia for very long, but the fact that he got some exposure and time suggests that the GCW folks understood that Golden was a talent who would go on to be a real draw. I don't think Golden could've handled a competitive squash here -- Fever's not the guy you want getting offense in on a hoss like this. Just interesting to see how a territory handled Hogan before he was Hogan.

BRET HART V BUZZ SAWYER: A viewer requested young lions match, if we are to believe that withered, besotted commentator fellow. The fans, see, they wanted to see scientific wrestling. Buzz Sawyer has trimmed his hair some, and Bret Hart has just gotten in from a big night challenging for the Macon TV title -- after losing the match to Tony Russo, he spit on the American flag, saying 'Macon screwed Bret... so Macon can screw itself' and pledged never to return to that "dungheap" ever again. All of this incredible backstory isn't mentioned by Solie, but is mentioned on the Senegalese announcing track playing in my head. Sort of a Ladysmith Black Blonde Redhead Biv Devoe kind of amalgam of musical goodness. Anyway, you know the drill here -- both guys are serious wrestlers, every bit as good on the mat as anyone ever to grace the Techwood Drive ring, and they keep it tight and realistic. Sawyer clearly descended into self-parody, and really, Hart did also, but this shows both men as young, hungry, lean technicians, both interested in going out there and having a helluva match. So here we get tight matwork and the kind of draw that sets both guys up to be credible opening match guys around the horn. Good stuff, especially if you are one of those Hart completists.

TOMMY RICH V BARON VON RASCHKE: A TV match teaser for the Omni show, from early 1981 or whatever. This was remarkably fast-paced for a Raschke match -- the story was that Rich had just won a competitive squash and Raschke jumped him in the ring and started an impromptu reel around the fountain. Raschke was working stiff AWA brawler type offense, at Rich's pace, and it was pretty neat for a few minutes until interference -- Austin Idol. Powder. The misapplied claw. A bizarre promo where Baron sez 'I work for no man! I am no body's agent!' or words to that effect.

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IWRG- 2/10/05- Arena Naucalpan

[DEAN RASMUSSEN with interruptions by an irrate TOM KARRO-GARSNER]

I lauf at Schneider because he actually had this dvd sitting around his house for a while before realizing that it had Negro Navarro and Solar I going to the mat for nine minutes. Thats like having a dvd with a 1997 WCW house on it where Fit Finlay and Steve Regal had a streetfight the day after spending the night arguing over who was better- Van Morrison or the Beatles. and then not watching it for a few months before realizing it. And I want to say that Cub's Fan's lucha blog is your true absolute motherfucker because I found out the entire card of this in ONE second after going there. And thus I know that Star Boy was the unmasked guy and what Violencia and Veneno look like without thier masks.

Galactik/ Star Boy vs Carta Brava/ Fantasma de la Ópera: This had really fun matwork in the first caida before slightly falling to pieces. Carta Brava and Fantasma de la Ópera have

superBoss masks- a retro throwback black with white trim Mermanos Dinamitas type thing, with the FdIÓ having the classic phantom mask, as opposed to the Andrew Lloyd Webber version so it's OLD SCHOOL~! It's OLD SCHOOL! It's OLD SKOOL! But Galaktik has the swankiest mask- sky blue with antennae that look like he has a rollercoaster track on his head. It actually makes up for the fact that he is quite clunky, lumbering technico. Star Boy does a stripper entrance and he should have lost the "boy" designation and went with "aging gone to seed male stripper"- though Star Boy rolls off the tongue while Star Aging Gone To Seed Male Stripper is moving past the Antifaz del Norte limit of syllables in your name. Actually, he should change his name to Star Man Who Would Have A Sweet Leglock On Fantasma de la Opera- as he makes the first fall fun for me. FOR ME. Fun for ME. Carta Brava can do nothing with Galaktik- LummoX From The Planet ShokMAStorrr. Hell, I dig Star Boy and FdIÓ in this- noting that the finish of the first caida is Star Boy running up the ropes and then hitting a plancha afterwhich FdIÓ does the same but- SINCE HE IS A RUDO AND HAS TO CHEAT BECAUSE HE ISN'T TECHNICALLY SOUND (thus "technico")- can't pull off the plancha and slips off the toprope, hotshotting himself to lose. Lose like a man. A man who understands who to be a rudo. Second caida is Carta Brava and FdIÓ smacking Galaktik and Star Boy around like bitches. The third caida is more focused fighting betwixt Star Boy and FdIÓ and Galactika whips out a Tope Con Hilo which was perfectly fine. Star Boy rolls up FdIÓ and we all are warmed by the glow of knowing. Knowing that this was the first. THE FIRST. The first match of the show. Yes it was.

MEANWHILE, TomK reads into this match shades of grey that I couldn't be bothered with: "Aw man. I think Galaktik comes out to the theme song to Battlestar Galactic and maybe working a face Cylon gimmick.

"I don't know who is the guy who comes up with gimmicks in IWRG...I mean Scorpio Jr has had the book their for a long time...might be him. But whoever it is, is essentially more SciFi obsessed than Lawler was Famous Monsters of Filmland obsessed.

"I think you also should rewatch the second and third fall of that atch as it starts to fall apart but then Galaktik can't eat a GoryBomb which is finish of second fall. Instead of falling forward he lands straight down splat on his kneecaps busting them both. I mean I've watched alot of dangerous indy moves but he did more damage to his knees in one fall than Kobashi's done in a career.

"And while Galaktik was a lumbering robot technico in first two falls. Suddenly he's as expressive as Lyger. Incredibly facially expressive masked wrestler as I think he can't help but express "I HAVE NO KNEES. WHAT HAPPENED TO MY KNEES". Carta Brava and Fantom de La Opera then go all All Japan and start working over his destroyed knees. Galaktik paces around the ring trying to get feeling back and well his selling essentially saves the match. Of course it isn't so much selling as it's HE HAS NO KNEES. When he eventually fights through pain to hit his dive and stuff it doesn't bother me as much as it normally would cause its not like he's ignoring the selling so much as he's ignoring the LEGIT pain.

"I dug the first fall. Second fall kind of fell apart but the human drama of Galaktic the Cylon being crippled saved the third. Plus its IWRG where in the undercard you only expect to have one guy who knows how to actually work trying to save a match. Here you had kind of three guys who could work and one compelling human interest story.

Your selling that match short."

MEANWHILE, I would say that Galaktic just kinda sucks and fucked his knee up.

Cerebro Negro/ Dr. Cerebro vs Cyborg/ Xibalba: Xibalba has an interesting mask- as it is the old AAA Venum mask but gone all Montana Militia. Cerebro Negro's mask is pretty much Dr Cerebro's mask with green on the bottom white part so I assume IWRG was losing out on the gravy-train of brain masks after Dr Cerebro was unmasked. Schneider said this match was just below mediocre- which means that he scanned past it to get to the Solar I match, I assume. Cyborg look like one of those guys who would play the anti-union enforcer for the United Fruit Company in one of those 80s pro-Sandinista movies. You know, he should be threatening to castrate James Wood in the back of a bus. Maybe he did. I don't know. He throws a Sean Young-esque gentle girly clothesline without all the fun Sean Young crazy. He does beat the shit out of Cerebro Negro in the corner convincingly so I'm plenty in love with Cyborg- in a fourth best Pandillero kind of way. Xibalba is fun brawler on the outside kinda and they wander through the first caida randomly being assholes. Doc Cerebro gets fired up and Cyborg takes his assbeating in grand, dramatic fashion- far out-dramatizing the actual assbeating. I mean, it's fricking Dr Cerebro, not Negro Casas kicking his ass. This kinda devolves into a fistfight from "The Lone Ranger"- all monkey flips and comical punches. Schneider is far smarter than I.

Second caida, they slow it down some. After a while Cerebro Negro crushes Xibalba's skull with a off-target toprope Guillotine. They get rid of Cerebro Negro because Xibalba has crushed head and Cyborg and Cerebro do a singles match for a minute and the rudos go over in straight caidas. I am not really excited about following this feud between corrupt paramilitary rudos and really smart technicos. Completely lacks ass-stomping.

TOMK comments on Cerebros vs. Oficiales: "Schneider scanned past it? You think Schneider scanned past this match? It's IWRG!!! You watch it all.

"Plus its Xibalba! Xibalba is one of my favorite wrestlers to reference. I mean a day doesn't go by when I don't reference Xibalba. Lucha trios by number formula opening is first two guys pair up work the mat, second two guys pair up work fast exchanges, third two guys pair up work big throws/power moves. Xibalba is the IWRG indy quick exchange worker and is not good enough to be memorable and kind of a running joke that I use. Like most of my running jokes, no one gets it.

"Angle v Michaels was worked stylistically like Coco Verde v. Xibalba but better than that. Not as good as Caifan Rockero II vs. Oriental I but better than Coco Verde vs. Xibalba. Not a style I care for much."

"So no way was anyone scanning past a Xibalba match...that would be like Phil scanning past a Chasyn Rance match. They've also started calling Xibalba "El Guerrero Maya" which kind of adds to the comedy. Cause well Xibalba is no Black Terry.

"Xibalba doesn't get to do any fast lucha exchanges in this match. But I dug his Mafia kicks as he does a ton of Mafia kicks and both Cerebros are really great at eating them and flying around for them. Cyborg is a guy who I don't think I've ever enjoyed. This may be the most I've enjoyed him as he was ok as a bargain basement Pierroth.

"I guess there are two other things that need to be pointed out. One, this is on some level essentially a heel v. heel match. As los Cerebros are part of La Corporacion which is Veneno's huge heel stable that has been all over IWRG for a couple years now and have all the belts N.W.O. style. There is some sort of angle throughout the show where they tease that commentator Javier Llanes is in bed with The Corporacion (a ton of subtle commentator stuff plus Corporacion refuses to be interviewed by anyone but him, he leaves broadcast booth when team is losing, he whispers stuff to Corporacion members, he may have slipped some money to a ref in the main, etc)... I have no idea what this leads to as Alfredo doesn't have the next month and a half of IWRG.

"The Cerebros actually work the match as technicos and that's probably a smart move. They work more face face than the kind of tweener face you get in rudo contra rudo matches. They work face here but they're part of a heel stable. So this really is your indy version of Arena Mexico's heel vs heel stable booking.

"Second point is this is a relaxed rules match. Not a street fight per-se but relaxed rules match—ref is there only to count pin or acknowledge submission. Los Oficiales bloodied Los Cerebros on last show and so they have this "relaxed rules" revenge match. If the Oficiales win they will get to challenge for the Cerebros' belts.

"So its heel v heel. It's a revenge match with relaxed rules. And it's a match where title contention is on the line. Given those stip, you want a lot more "ass stomping" of a match than this. On the other hand this may be the best Corporacion vs. Oficiales match I've seen.

MEANWILE, I would add that- fascinating backstory aside- this match kinda sucked.

TomK says, " Well, the point of the backstory is that it only serves to enhance the mediocrity of the actual match"

Solar I/ Super Astro/ Ultraman vs El Signo/ Negro Navarro/ Texano: The late great Texano, El Signo and Negro Navarro are the Missionaries Of Death and if you think you know of a cooler stable name, go fuck yourself. There is nine minutes of this match that we remind of why you are on the internet reading about wrestling from around the world. BECAUSE this is the only way you will have access to Negro Navarro and Solar I going at it on the mat for 9 minutes.

Schneider and I synched up on this because we both enjoy the wrestling and sometimes want to share the experience with a friend. I was going on and on about how this matwork was beautiful and graceful and works within the context of the violence that is behind all Lucha- and how that violence is lacking in the rhythmic gymnastics of X-Division US indie wrestling. Schneider- being Schneider- said, "Put your pipe down professor and look at fuckin' Solar ROLL INTO THAT FUCKIN TOP WRISTLOCK!" And it's fucking awesome. Because all these guys are really old and we talk about how the tenor of the match changes when Negro Navarro gets his tendons stretched by Solar to lose the secondt caida. The rudo- who are all a thousand years old- say, "Fuck this old-timer exhibition of Mexican wrestling moves where we shake hands after every mat sequence out of mutual respect because of our collective stature and history together. WE ALWAYS HATED YOU MOTHERFUCKERS AND NOW WE'RE GOING TO BEAT THE LIVING FUCK OUT OF YOU." The late great Texano is just fuckin' AWESOME beating the shit out of technicos. He and the ancient Ultraman go fucking pillar to post. Schneider noted that the first caida shakes the rust off and all these part-time retirees throw it into overdrive. Fuck, Super Astro looks like he needs to lose the sandwich shop and go back to fulltime grappling. Going back and watching the first caida again, I think it was the point where Negro Navarro spins into an Indian Deathlock where we try to figure out how much money we would need to be money marks and bring in these two for an NWA-VA card so we can watch them live. Maybe it was the point where Navarro captures Solar's arms and starts driving Solar's face into the mat. It's all beautiful and stylized and the set-up of the submission on Solar by Navarro is something you just never see anywhere. Just masterful mat wrestling. The second caida starts with Texano and Ultraman noticing that they are going to get fuckin smoked if they don't step up, so Texano works the pressure holds on the wrist to set-up Ultraman's armdrags. El Signo gets his old ass to fly all over the ring for Super Astro's signature spots and it all points back to Solar I and Negro Navarro going at it again. The Flying Keylock that Solar hits on Navarro is soooooo fucking boss and soooooo pisses off the rudos. Wristlock submission versus wristlock submission to set up a third caida ass-stomping- THAT'S the Professional Wrestling I read about. I love the part where Navarro is selling the wrist and trying to put on a brave face and the other two are going, "Yeah okay. Fuck this. Somebody gets their fucking teeth kicked in." OH MAN, I forgot that Solar and Navarro start the third caida and Solar goes right back to the bad wrist triggering Texano to beat the shit out of Super Astro on the floor and El Signo to stomp the fuck out of Ultraman in the corner. Texano brings out the BULLWHIP and beats Ultraman over the back with it. Navarro finally tags back in and Solar comes out to fight him and they kick the hell out of him. Ultraman and Texano fight like motherfuckers after Ultraman saves Solar from getting the living hell kicked out of him. Then they do some goofy six-man spots and hit a bunch of highspots to clear the ring for the ten count. And this is a fued I think I would enjoy catching up on.

MEANWHILE, TomK says, "Ok DAMN. I was looking forward to this match to see what these old guys could still do; looking forward to this as nostalgia match and because Javier Llanes does commentary for IWRG and this is the kind of match that provides a lot of opportunities for him to go into historical digressions: Hector Guerrero worked solar in a face v face singles match in Arena Aficion? The inventor of the SuperAstro/Rayo reverse tope was a 1930s era Chinese luchador named Ah Choo? But instead of getting a nostalgia match I got a really great

contemporary match. I mean, the slow burn two out of three falls format is one of my favorite ways to lay out a lucha match.

"First two falls worked as two veteran teams respecting each other keeping it on the mat. And it's kept on the MAT. So first fall starts with Ultraman matching up against Signo, at one point Signo grecco pummels Ultraman into the heel corner and the heels don't take the opportunity to beat on Ultraman, and at the end of their section the two slap hands. And its Texano and SuperAstro. Remember me talking about the formula where first guy takes it to the mat second does quick exchanges...well this is IWRG where they'll let first pair take it to the mat and do slow matwork followed by second pair coming in and take it right back to the mat. Everyone takes it to the mat. Ultraman v. Signo on mat looked slow and like they weren't that comfortable, Texano and Super Astro work at faster pace and do more complex mat stuff but still awkwardness to it and then its time for Solar I versus Navarro and -holy shit, these two are on just another level. As these two are super smooth doing lock ups and escapes and just a ton of sequences which you've never seen before. I mean you've seen most of the stuff that the other guys did on the mat but the Solar versus Navarro section has about 12 spots that US indy guys could steal for finishers. At the end of first caida, veteran technicos go over to congratulate the veteran rudos, hug and raise heels arms.

"2nd fall is a little shorter. Texano and Ultraman match up this time. Again on the mat. And by second fall ring rust is off. Signo and SuperAstro work the actual fast exchange section. Super Astro is really good at hitting all his signature spots and Signo hits the best lariats of anyone in this match. Odd- as Texano is great brawler but any double clothesline you want to watch Signo's half. Solar and Navarro lock up again and, fuck, you want to watch those two guys forever. Solar gets Navarro in submission and, shit, it was all well and good when the technicos lost to be all code of honor shaking hands but now heels are pissed and you can watch them slowly burning. The faces congratulate themselves and then come over to raise Navarro's arm as despite losing still being great and the heels just stew at all the presumptuousness.

"3rd fall is all Navarro pissed calling out Solar Solar goes right back to arm and the other heels come out and enough mat stuff its time to beat on each other. Crowds boos the heels for breaking the code of honor and its tecnico v rudo. The weirdest thing about the third fall is that the third fall is all about Texano v Ultraman sections. Ultraman has always been the least of the Space Cadetes but watching him throw combinations and Flair flopping when hit with combinations by Texano is really really good. Who knew? Match ends with 80s AJ brawling count out finish."

Black Tiger III/ Negro Casas/ Pierroth/ Violencia vs Pantera/ Pentagon Black/ Scorpio Jr./ Veneno: I was with Phil and Tom at the Greensboro county fair (though I'm sure Greensboro is in a differently named county but it's North Carolina so who really gives a shit.) when they somehow booked a CMLL show at the adjacent Greensboro Coliseum. After the dare to eat the deep fried Oreos that were hand-dipped by the unwashed hand of the carney that looked like he was finger-bangin' overweight 15 year olds by the titl-a-whirl but before the discussion outside the steakhouse about how many truckers one would need to blow to make it back to Virginia if

one of us got left in a parking lot of a steakhouse in Mulehump, NC, THERE IT WAS- THE REASON WHY PIERROTH HAS BEEN AT THE TOP OF THE CARD FOREVER. Live- at the fuckin GREENSBORO COLISEUM- he brawled like a fucking motherfucker. I was breathless. Now that he is showing up on my TV in the Capos vs Perros del Mal fued and I... I... I.... holy fuck is he the main reason I fell back in love with the Lucha Libre. Anyway, Schneider was telling me that this is a fun match and points out that Pierroth and fuckin' Negro Casas are in this match so why wouldn't this rule? He goes on about how this is guys who can wrestle mixed in with guys who aren't so good. Then I had to do the dishes and he had to take another call so it is RAW DEAN ON MATCH ACTION! Okay, I don't know what Pierroth's stable is called here in IWRG but Veneno screams a lot about La Corporacion and what a pussy Pierroth is, so I'm suitably stoked. Black Tiger chews on Scorpio Jr's blading scars so I'm assuming Scorpio will be coated by his own blood soon. Pierroth starts punching the hell out of Scorpio and then castrates Pentagon with his belt. OOO! Black Tiger throws Pentagon facefirst into the Co-Cola cooler- as it seems that the cooler is the WWE ringsteps of Arena Naucalpan. The camera pans back and you really lose any dynamics of the brawling. The ref raises the unmasked arm of Violencia- in that Violencia is not wearing a mask and appears to be the bass player of Van Halen after he had started hanging sheetrock for two years. Pierroth and Negro Casas bust Scorpio wide open- as Pierroth punches him in the head while Casas has him in a Bow and Arrow and one must note that Scorpio will fucking spew- just fuckin SPEW- blood all over the ring. Black Tiger does the awesome thing of crossfacing the gigmarks and blood just fucking POURS out of Scorpio's forehead. I love fuckin' Lucha Libre. God bless the fucking internet and God bless Phil Schneider for mailing this to me. Scorpio dodges Black Tiger's Avalanche and fires back on Pierroth and they all take it to the floor again. Fuck the bullshit, SCORPIO headbutting Pierroth's forehead open is fucking AWWWESOME. Pierroth is in a sleeper and you get that El Dandy/Santo, LaParka/Santo, Yamakawa/Honma wash of blood- uniting both wrestlers as their blood intermingles and you can't really tell who is spraying plasma out of his head the fastest. Fuck, Scorpio and Pierroth is as much fun as anything I saw Pierroth do in the vastly better Capos vs Perros del Mal feud. Third caida, Scorpio beats the shit out of Casas and then Pierroth and Scorpio decide to beat the living dogshit out of each other some more. After Pierroth takes the "I'm a thousand years old" old man bump through the ropes to the floor, a regular trios match breaks out- which is kinda how this same type of match in the same kind of feud in Arena Mexico. It doesn't have the UNGODLY heat of the FUED but Scorpio actually does a decent approximation of the violence Universo brings to the FUED over yonder- even if he doesn't have the Black Hammer, the key to the greatness of that fued. they hilariously AAA the highspot train- and God how many more topes can Pantera do at his age? Pierroth wins by trying shove his entire arm up Scorpio's ass but only ends up unfouling him for the Evil Pinfall. That was fun. BLOOD!

MEANWHILE, TomK Says, "So you watch the IWRG semi main and you're happy and excited about the LUCHA LIBRE. And while earlier I said that "you watch all the IWRG". The thing is often times you don't watch the IWRG main events as they can be phoned the fuck in. But not tonight. And it's another rudo stable vs. Corporacion match with the Corporacion being positioned as face defenders of IWRG vs. the EMLL outsiders. And this is all out brawling.

"The bulk of brawl is worked around the Pierroth v. Scorpio pairing and the Negro Casas vs. Veneno pairing; everyone else is pretty inconsequential. Black Tiger does some fun growling mic work and he drops Pentagon Black on the beer cooler in the first fall and gets dropped on the beer cooler in revenge spot by Pentagon Black in the second fall. Pentagon Black doesn't isn't that important either only thing I remember about him in the match outside of the beer cooler is a spot where Pierroth crotches Black with his own karate belt. Think the old Fuerza v Octagon rope tying spot but instead with the karate belt and Pierroth forcing Black's balls back up into Pentagons' taint. Pantera is the one tecnico member of the Corporacion and is of no use during the first two brawling falls. Violencia keeps him occupied and neither are really in this match till the third fall. Third fall has a bunch of Pantera fast exchanges and dives but he isn't really in any other part of this match.

"So forget all them. This match is about Pierroth and Negro versus Scorpio and Veneno. Scorpio can be hit or miss as good ring general as seen him as the guy who holds matches with green guys together and he can brawl and throw great punches and bleed and sell. His actual comeback in this match was firey but I remember his clotheslines looking weaker than usual (perhaps all the blood got in his eyes and he couldn't see where to hit them.) After Scorpio led the Corporacion comeback, I did really dig the way he worked over Pierroth's cut. Scorpio- instead of punching the cut- put on a nasty vice grip and really seemed to be squeezing the blood out of Pierroth's skull. And, well, Veneno is Veneno and he isn't very good. Veneno facially looks like Robert Englund in StrangeLand, does great Robert Englund in StrangeLand style mic work and can sell like Robert Englund in StrangeLand. Unfortunately, his offense normally looks like Robert Englund in V.

"So you're left with Negro Casas and Pierroth as the rudo stars of this match. I've praised Casas again and again as one of the greatest faces of all time...but he's even more fun as a rudo. He does an amazing job selling for Veneno making all of Veneno's stuff look good. I mean there is a point in match where Veneno bites at both of Negro's ears and, normally, biting is the best looking part of Veneno's offence- but Negro makes all the other stuff look great. I mean, he makes the biting look absolutely savage and makes the body shots look like they connect. The other big Casas moment I remember is an early section where Casas goes after Veneno's legs while Veneno is still standing.. Just nasty combos of stomps, leg kick and lunging punches at Veneno's lower leg.

"Dean's talked a bunch about the greatness that is Pierroth in this match and he's a fucking STAR. But the one segment he failed to mention is Pierroth's foul on Veneno. Dean mentioned the brutality of the final foul on Scorpio but damn that's nothing. In first fall Pierroth pushes Veneno into corner with Veneno's butt facing the ring. Pierroth reaches through Veneno's legs grabs Veneno's scrotum and jerks his arm back. It's a spot you're going to watch again and again as it really looks like Pierroth pulled Veneno's balls through his asshole. I mean if you watch a lot of wrestling you've seen a lot of low blows and lots of guys get crotched and you're sort of immune to them. But you watch this and your stomach will turn as question how it's possible to work that spot. How do you "work" scrotum getting pulled out ass?"

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When you kiss me, does the lipstick on your lip stick
to my face?

SINGLES GOING STEADY

Will you miss me? In your dreams, does your lover
have my face?

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Super Crazy/ Xtreme Tiger vs Crazy Boy/ Joe Lider- NGX- At some point- in some gymnasium in Mexico-[RASMUSSEN]:I love garbage wrestling. LOVE IT. I'm told I will hate this. Well, I'm a freak. I'm from Missouri when I'm not from Virginia so SHOW ME! SHOW ME that it sucks. Luckily, this is on the youtube and thus I can watch it without having to go through any trouble- because great garbage wrestling is cathartic and arty and great. Bad garbage wrestling is the worst shit you ever saw. And I didn't read that Necro-Butcher or Yamakawa was in this- so I wouldn't have gone to any lengths to see this. But it's the 06 and the youtube brings every Celtic Frost video ever and also brings us the Mexican garbage wrestling. God, this is pretty fucking bad. Sorta like four Nakamakis without the grasp of psychology. They run the ropes though the ropes ARE COVERED IN BARBED-WIRE. Super Crazy spends the first five minutes giggling Joe Liden and then gets him in a Tarantula in the barbed-wire ropes they just no-sold running the ropes into. Extreme Tiger and Joe Liden do the most yardtard version of Total Elimination I'm assuming in the annals of paying wrestling. Whether there is a huge wad of actual backyard wrestling on YouTube (I would assume) would make me wonder if that was the most backyard wrestling Total Elimination ever on YouTube. I will not research that. Crazy Boy and Joe do some just basically crappy indie spots- which is a giant step up, actually- and some random chairshots and sloppy Van Daminatoria. Extreme Tiger does a shitty version of the INATELY shitty Raven droptoehold to the chair, but Super Crazy does the only goodlooking thing in the match so far with the vicious dropkick through the top of the chair. Extreme tiger's missile dropkick through a chair was nice also. Crazy Boy hops up after taking all this and goes on offense. And I'm assuming noone trained him about how professional wrestling works. They do some highspots and Super Crazy hits a dropkick on Liden's knee that he IMMEDIATELY jops back up on and goes on offense. Jesus Christ, this isn't very good. They hit each other with flaming two by fours and go straight to the toprope?!? This is more of a list of stunts than a wrestling match. Super Crazy hits a nice brainbuster and then takes a DDT from Crazy Boy and Liden hits the most hilarious CANADIAN DESTROYER EVER! EVER! Then it just really shitty and horrible and embarrassing. XTREME TIGER OFF THE TOP to lead to the most

embarrassingly bad exchange involving Super Crazy in his entire career. Super Crazy is FINALLY smart enough to take it home. They weren't lying. This was really shitty. But I don't call this shitty garbage wrestling. This is just shitty wrestling. Not knowing how to sell anything isn't something you can connect to garbage wrestling. This is just fundamentally bad wrestling. And Super Crazy- fucking Super Crazy- should have made some attempt to make some sort of sense out of this. Fuck, he should know that those cameras at ringside would mean that someone was recording this for posterity. Guhhh.

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JUMBO TSURUTA vs BOB ORTON, JR.: So one guy is dead and the other was probably the last guy in the WWE to call Juventud "baby". That's wrestling. This All Japan bout is from 1975, a banner year for America, to be sure. Orton features the Ward Churchill hair and even Jumbo's coiff looks like he's going to buy a tweed jacket with elbow patches and buck for tenure. 3/4 speed chain wrestling from the two young lions to start off, to tepid clappy-claps. Not so much working of the holds as you'd want to see -- staid but technically fine. Not much fire, despite Motoko staring at Ace's little Cowboy for most of the match -- maybe Mrs. B drove Orton into Hot Rod's arms, into his addiction to Juvi Juice. Who can say? A lot of side headlocks. A few hot sequences, and a pastiche of a strong 'big-time' finish, with increased fire, but this is more interesting as a glimpse at two future great workers, than as a true high-end match of the sort Jumbo began to do as a matter of course not long after. This would've been a great undercard match in the US southeast in the pre-1984 period though. The crowd, meanwhile, was dead early on but came to life at the end. [Emerson Lawson]

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ED 'STRANGLER' LEWIS vs. DICK 'FROM GERMANY' SHIKAT: June 9, 1932 IS THE DATE for this match, from the Madison Square Garden Bowl in beautiful Long Island City, New York. For those who wonder, this was the same card where future GOP Presidential Candidate Thomas Dewey wrestled a bear. Backstage heat here: Shikat had words with booker Vincenzo Russolini -- who wanted him to work as Dick the Frankfurter. Well, as they say, as long as the intermission runs on time. The match itself is some of the oldest footage surviving, and every serious fan knows the legitimacy of Ed Lewis, and I went into this with serious expectations. Despite the clippage -- which only allowed the viewing of a few seconds of consecutive action at a time -- it was remarkably easy to get a feel for how tight, realistic, and logical the work was. A hiptoss in this world was not a given but a legitimate offensive hold. There was no posturing on the mat, no limbs left unfettered by lazy or uninspired workers -- a beautiful thing. They worked a short-arm scissors spot where they did a sort of prehistoric Abe Jacobs Kiwi roll, but it didn't look choreographed; rather, like a legitimate attempt to escape. That's what I want to see -- legitimate struggle, not some pale pastiche done by someone who doesn't seem to understand why work has to look like shoot, or else it is necessarily invalid. Moves were flashed here that weren't named for generations after -- a Fujiwara armbar, for example, teased within the body of the match, just another link in the glorious gold rope that is well-executed chain wrestling. Lewis, a dead-ringer for Edward G. Robinson, is the Little Caesar of the mat game here, bringing all of the offense his reputation would dictate -- Shikat though is his match, and as the bigger guy, does a remarkable job making it seem like size is irrelevant to the contest. 6 minutes in, Strangler has taken the match to the ground, using his squatness to counteract that leverage

advantage. Simple psychology, effective psychology. Shikat regains advantage though, breaking out a variation of the old X-Pac buzzkill and using forearm strikes, just brilliant, fucking brilliant, and so beautiful -- it's like the wrestling was real back then, sort of like the currency and the Hooverville Street Fight matches popular on the cards of the day -- then, like a man would, slaps Lewis across his face. Just beautiful. "What up, bitch?", as they say at the Westminster Dog Show. Really, so many bizarre moves -- a snap suplex among them -- and so many basic moves that are crisper than Church's -- like a zillion fireman's carry takedowns. Lewis is a rare wrestler and watching this match is like the first time I heard Robert Johnson or Ian Curtis or Augustus Pablo or Gorecki -- there is a sense of permanence in what Lewis does. There's no Nielsen uncertainty. No writers. There's the best fucking shooter in the world working wrestling matches and protecting his interests. That is manhood. That is America. And so when I watch Shikat wriggle out of a headscissors, I don't care. Teutonic adversity is not such a big deal when you are the fucking Strangler, and you can kill a man for not playing nice. Those are the stakes of these wrenching side headlocks and whiplash beals and grinding ankle locks and deathgrip inside cradles. Because, see, Strangler Lewis worked a five and a half hour match. 4/4 legit, you pissants. That was back when men were men. When they didn't apologize to broads because they didn't spend enough on diamonds for their fingers. When they didn't even let the women vote, because they'd elect men who would make all manner of vice socially unacceptable... for the children, natch. But look at the children. Look into their eyes, take the measure of their squalid souls, your sisters, your brothers, that girl you want to fuck, the boy you blew at summer camp, with Don Henley's 'Boys of Summer' in your head because it's what would be playing from your mom's room as you played Pocket Simon and she played ponyride with Uncle Mel. This squalid world would've disgusted Ed 'the Strangler' Lewis, as it does me, and you, if you have the balls you were born with. Lewis, who let that Kraut potato him square in his ugly kisser, wouldn't have had patience for latchkey kids on ritalin who are taught that the only thing that matters are the labels on their clothes, the notches in their bedposts, and the tattoos on their girlfriend's naughty bits. It's obvious in his work -- how he stretches the German out like the turkey day wishbone, how he works around Shvak when the Kraut is on offense, how he just controls this match, this anachronistic thing that makes me mourn for what can never be again. If there are any drawbacks to the match, the finish did seem a bit anticlimactic. But this otherwise is a match you have to see, if you want to know what wrestling once was, what America once was. The good guy wins, by the way. Our son of a bitch. The American Strangler. [Jen The Box]

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BUDDY ROGERS V JOE GARCIA: Mid-Atlantic wrestling, 1961 studio match from Charlotte NC, courtesy of the Mid-Atlantic gateway site. First things first, it's interesting to me that Rogers is getting dealt with in two consecutive issues. Secondly, it's doubly interesting to see footage from 1961 TV wrestling. As quasi-educated fans, we are taught, I think, to see the 60s as a dead zone in which nothing happened -- an era of Gene Kiniski or whatever. There was no boom, or signature match from the decade, to hold on to like Brisco/Funk or Jumbo/Robinson, to say 'goddamn, that was exemplary'. It's kind of like the estate jewelry auctions on TV -- memories of a dead era, of a matwork Chernobyl. Who really can say? Time to shoot the shaggy dog and get to the match here, which is rarer than a Leonid Brezhnev blowjob Polaroid.

A quasi-competitive squash -- Garcia starts off strong, with an OAS-approved standing side headlock that Rogers sells like the frickin Masterlock, like, totally selling that shit. Um, yeah, then Rogers gets on offense and starts potatoing Jose Cuervo in the back of his head -- these sick shots that give the lie to the assertions by folks like Thesz that Rogers lacked a certain physicality. Sure, maybe Rogers wasn't a shooter/hooker, but here in this squash, it is tremendous to see Rogers taking liberties, even though it runs counter to any rational conception of the business. Rogers ends it pretty quickly, with a lightning-fast move into the figure four off a flying knee -- a one minute competitive squash, an amazing and beautiful thing, and evidence of what a great worker Buddy Rogers really was. Then Rogers, as you'd expect, refuses to relinquish the hold -- he's bearing down, pissed off about how Nixon was dogged out in South America or something. Garcia plays his part like he's never seen a wrestling match, so Rogers is selling for two, while the voiceover goes 'why doesn't he break the hold? why can't someone here make him break it? Mother of Mercy, is this the end of Chico?' And, well, the color guy, Billy Darnell, is the local hot shit babyface, and you know what happens then. Rogers makes a marginal uppercard babyface look so good that the house was packed in Charlotte for the blowoff match. So fucking ill. [Kip Frey]

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BUDDY ROGERS V JOHNNY VALENTINE: The downside is that the commentator is one of those jokey little proles who calls the matches like the action is wacky and he's in on the joke. Because here the action isn't wacky. A 3 minute newsreelish clipjob from 1961 or so, Madison Square Garden, but what's here is fierce. 2 piledrivers from Nature Boy -- called 'headbutts' by the soulless pitchman on the mike -- that knock JV out cold. Potato shots from both men that presaged Valentine's super-stiff Mid Atlantic work years later. I would've liked to have seen the mat stuff -- what was shown here were big showbizzy bumps -- but this looked really white-hot, with moves like beals and flying headscissors being done in a way that looked more legit than choreographed. A very different style for JV than the deliberate stuff the WrestlingClassics.com crowd loves him for -- good, good stuff. [Pascual Perez]

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JUMBO TSURUTA V BOB ORTON, JR.: So one guy is dead and the other was probably the last guy in the WWE to call Juventud "baby". That's wrestling. This All Japan bout is from 1975, a banner year for America, to be sure. Orton features the Ward Churchill hair and even Jumbo's coiff looks like he's going to buy a tweed jacket with elbow patches and buck for tenure. 3/4 speed chain wrestling from the two young lions to start off, to tepid clappy-claps. Not so much working of the holds as you'd want to see -- staid but technically fine. Not much fire, despite Motoko staring at Ace's little Cowboy for most of the match -- maybe Mrs. B drove Orton into Hot Rod's arms, into his addiction to Juvi Juice. Who can say? A lot of side headlocks. A few hot sequences, and a pastiche of a strong 'big-time' finish, with increased fire, but this is more interesting as a glimpse at two future great workers, than as a true high-end match of the sort Jumbo began to do as a matter of course not long after. This would've been a great undercard match in the US southeast in the pre-1984 period though. The crowd, meanwhile, was dead early on but came to life at the end. [Emerson Lawson]

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FIT FINLAY V EL BANDITO: From Reslo, 1988. What stands out to me here, well, is the sort of archetypal imagery. Bandito has a full-on Mercury coke duster stache; Finlay is seconded by a cigar store Indian in a gold lame' dress. Finlay starts off with some clubberin and a tight chancery, and things look promising until Bandito makes his comeback -- lame 80s punches and the 'two-fisted fiery Latino face pose' made popular by AAA workers Hu Chavez and Eazy-E Morales. And that sets the tone for this underwhelming, superannuated affair, with Finlay's work looking more like 'rasslin' than the high-end stuff we've become accustomed to. I mean, we get a nervehold here, as if Fit realizes the best thing to do with this lump of crap from south of the border is to stall out the match with control wrestling and get the thing over with. The crowd is hot-hot-hot for the tamale in tights, but Finlay is doing all the work here, bumping and stooging like a great heel working a worthless face. A few minutes in, Finlay gets back on offense, and it gets a little carny -- Finlay punches Bandito in his ample gut while holding a hammerlock, then ably transitions into a sort of crossface/hammerlock combo that I am describing less than perfectly [in this instance, Finlay is facing him]. He seems to be working as loose as possible here for whatever reason -- the stiffness we love from him seems, for whatever reason, to be absent from this performance, which reminds me of some low-end Global or Memphis. 3 falls, 8 minutes, halfassed. [Jen The Box]

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LOU THESZ V MASA CHONO: 74 year old Thesz here, on the day after Xmas, 1990, is in the last match of his incredible career against Masa Chono, a man to whom he imparted all kinds of useful knowledge. Thesz has a spry ring entrance for someone as old as him, and there is genuine emotion in his eyes as he bows to the crowd, showing them respect and love and appreciation for all of the times he'd gotten to work Japan. The permanence, the respect for tradition -- these things overwhelm me. Likewise overwhelming to me are Thesz's eyes. He is a consummate worker, and one of the things I've always loved about Thesz is that his character essentially is that of the carny, dickish heel -- taking liberties on the slant, never giving a sucker an even break. But here his eyes betray him. Boxing Day 1990 would be the end, and it was finally non-negotiable. The set-up here -- protege versus mentor -- is all so very 'Anxiety of Influence', and it's easy to think mawkish thoughts about how time betrays all of us, but these are given pause: Thesz comes out, lickety-split, with a lightning quick back suplex on Chono. Just incredible -- not much elevation, but considering that Thesz looks like Alan Greenspan here, amazing that it happened at all. The early going is all Thesz, with signature spots: for example, his not-so-clean breaking off the ropes, giving Chono that patented short elbow, half three-stooges, and half schoolyard bully. The writeup here naturally focuses on Thesz, but it should be said that Chono is making the match ultimately work as well as it does, giving Thesz all the help he needs to make his offense look credible, without stooging and taking away from Thesz's final match. On the aforementioned suplex, and elsewhere in the match, Chono managed to sell like Thesz was his physical equal -- tremendous. The middle of this 8 minute match drags somewhat, here and there, as Thesz's limitations ineluctably take a toll, foreshadowing the match's ultimate collapse, but that's mitigated by some nifty chain-wrestling that seemed heavily influenced by CM Punk. Crowd starts to turn on the match towards the end -- whistles of derision bidding the old man to exit the stage. And those catcallers may have had

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STEVE CORINO [C] V SHINJIRO OHTANI: From 1-22-06, this match for the prestigious AWA World Title was held under the auspices of ZERO-ONE MAX. Well, all right! Folks on the net are panning this match for a variety of reasons -- lack of heat and a general sloppiness on the part of Corino being a couple of them. But people don't give Corino enough credit, typically, so here Corino gets a fair viewing, one free of IWC prejudice against him. Before the match starts, though, two things: one being that Ohtani looks 45 years old now, and it's not a good 45, especially in the face. The second: Corino's rave entrance theme is pathetic. He needs to drop that shit -- is he Eric Watts? Match starts off with some cooperative, loose chain wrestling -- the

type where it is obvious even to the most retarded mark in Sapporo that the workers would rather things look pretty than competitive. Not the Corino I used to love -- Hashimoto, for example, brought great stuff out of Corino because with Hashimoto there was no other option but 3/4 legit. Bockwinkel is kicking capri highwaters sitting in a folding chair outside the ring. Even sitting there thinking about whether it's time for a Colonial Penn policy, he is a touch of class/legitimacy/AARP discounts for the promotion. Corino is starting to pudge out a bit, interestingly, which may be why he's sucking wind even in this rather low-impact, bump-free affair. Steve may want to invest in a singlet, as he shows more 'workrate' tugging up his pants than working his offense. Nice bit where Bockwinkel stops Corino from clobbering Shinjiro with a folding chair -- interplay of legends. Back to the match, though, the major problem is Stardust Steve; he spends a few minutes setting up a figure four with all the ersatz Flair heel crap, then, when he gets Ohtani into the move, he just lays there like a bucket of chicken on the kitchen table. Just static, as if Corino knows that he's on the downward slide and stuck in exile in some indy twilight wrestling world, gaining twenty pounds of lard a year, coasting on a name and the faint tinge of forgotten promise. There was some good stuff here, towards the end, where Ohtani and Corino trade big spots and two counts. But this match looked like a shadow, ultimately, of what something between the same two guys five years ago would've been, in terms of execution, intensity, and workrate. Didn't feel like a world title defense, particularly, either.

[Barbara Clary]

TOSHIAKI KAWADA/KOHEI SATO V SHINJIRO OTANI/TAICHI ISHIKARI: From HUSTLE, 2/10/06 -- another fine offering from the MME board, natch. One of the most meaningful parts of the match for me was early on -- Otani and Kawada trading strikes reminded me of why I got into what the Japanese call "puroresu" -- i.e., the professional wrestling of which I am a fan. They were just laying them in there, like Tigre and Bunny trading verses on "Cars That Go Boom" by L'Trimm, not giving a fuck. That's how I like my wrestling -- watching it through a haze, of one sort or another, elevated beyond the point where the suspension of disbelief is an issue. Kawada has always taken me to that place, and even early on here, I wonder what was up that cooze Clary's ass when she panned Otani above. This Otani did not look like a shadow of his former self, thanks anyway, Babs. Back to the match. Everything here is stiff early on, though the psychology is sort of 'you hit your spots, I'll hit mine.' First-rate boot scrape from Sato in the corner is worth watching for those young kids at home, aspiring to participate in the sweet science. Match drags a bit when Ohtani's side gets on offense -- Ishikari may be a master of tai chi, but his kicks and strikes were tentative to the point of Exposing the Business -- something we frown upon here at the DVDVR. On the positive side, Ishi has a decent rear chinlock and eats Kawada's offense like a Mulkey getting beaten up by Wahoo. But just as I am about to suck Taichi drier than Billy Blanks reading budget numbers, I see him closing his li'l ka-ra-te jacket -- while selling for some token bit of Sato offense. I mean, really -- does he not want us to see his tits? Since when did HUSTLE sign Modesty Blaise to work the mixed tags? We get a lot of Ishikari and Sato together early on, and this is to the match's detriment -- neither are particularly fluid workers, and seem surprisingly slow, rendering the crowd static. 9 minutes in, feels like 20; Sato plays face in peril, while Ohtani's team comes off like a low-rent Black Bart/Ron Bass cheap heel combo. Except, see, Ron Bass knew how to hold Barry Windham right, the way he

wanted to be held before the days of chardonnay and counterfeit Euros.... Never mind that though. Back to this godawful match. Ishikari sends a formal letter of intent before Irish Whipping Sato across the ring. Then Ishikari takes some punishment, but it's clear the intent of that punishment is not to advance the story of the match, because there is no story, but instead to get the viewer to fetishize Ishikari. He's cute, but I'm not blowing him. This match really was, to borrow a phrase from some old Torch writer, 'masturbatory'. And I just didn't have enough vaseline to enjoy it. The last five or six minutes was agreeably hot and fast-paced, but the dearth of psychology early on undercut the burst of top-drawer yet familiar seeming action. Focusing on the young guys as much as the match did was probably a mistake also -- they looked mediocre at best, especially when isolated from their team's anchors. Ah well, new blood rising.... [Eustace Charleton Haney]

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EL SAMURAI V HIROOKI GOTO: From 2/5/2006's Circuit 2006 Acceleration. The svelteness of the Samurai of the 20th century is long gone, as the current incarnation appears to be in his third trimester. [Good luck getting rid of Sammy's little dividend in Sioux Falls, but I digress.] Match starts off with some feeling-out collar and elbow type, with Samurai quickly showing that he's lost little of the timing, aerialwise, that made him John Pelan's favorite wrestler besides Moondog Moretti. Middle-age has rendered Samurai sort of a dickish Slateresque heel, and much of the early match beyond the token plancha is just sort of low-grade, yet perfectly-acceptable asskicking. This match runs pretty short, but is very much a Worldwide full point -- just a solid six minute match. [Mister Kareem Muhammed]

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8 FISTS IN THE FACE OF WRESTLING, MOTHERFUCKER.
THE DEATH VALLEY PLAYAZ